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Karen Leyton
Chief Operating Officer

Subscribed and sworn to before me this

19th

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October

,2006

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Description:

CONVERTIBLE VEHICLE WITH TOP SUPPORT STRAP

The invention concerns a convertible vehicle with a movable roof having a flexible cover, according to the main concept of Claim 1.

It is known in convertible vehicles with flexible roof coverings, for example, those made of textile materials or plastics, to provide straps that engage beneath the roof cover and therefore support it during roof opening into the desired type of folding. Such straps can be attached to rod parts of the roof and extend, for example, from the rear clip to a front transverse support of the roof, the so-called roof strut. In previous solutions, the straps are tightened on their ends with the corresponding roof rod parts. The screw(s) pass(es) through the strap, which, like a safety belt, has a fiber structure to ensure high and permanent tensile strength. However, damage to this structure occurs with the screw passing through, so that the material can fray and is weakened when the screw(s) is/are attached.

The underlying problem of the invention is to improve strap fastening to rod parts on the roof.

The invention solves this problem by a convertible vehicle with the features of Claim 1 and by a movable vehicle roof with the features according to Claim 9. In regard to additional advantageous embodiments of the invention, Claims 2 through 8 are referred to.

With the invention, the strap need not be perforated and damaged for its attachment to a roof rod part. A reliable resistance against pulling out of the strap through the slit recess is provided by the end thickening.

The end thickening advantageously extends over the entire width of the strap and therefore lies against the slit recess when a tensile force is introduced.

A very efficient and simple abutment is achieved when the end thickening is formed by a piping.

In particular, a widening can be provided on at least one end area of the slit recess, so that the piping or similar end thickening can be made perpendicular to the securing position after assembly. The strap can therefore also be released again in a simple manner in the relaxed state, for example, when (partial) restoration of the roof is to be performed.

If the widening is dimensioned only slightly larger than the diameter of the end thickening, on the other hand, unintentional loosening, for example, also by occupants acting improperly, can be reliably avoided, which acquires significance, in particular, in unlined convertible tops, if the straps are accessible from the interior.

Two straps are advantageously provided, which can be fastened in the manner according to the invention, at least on the roof strut.

Further advantages and features of the invention can be seen from a practical example of the object of the invention, described below and shown at least schematically in the drawings.

In the drawings:

Fig. 1 shows a vehicle according to the invention in a perspective view, obliquely from the rear, with a completely closed roof,

Fig. 2 shows a view of an edge area of the roof strut with the strap fastened to it, roughly corresponding to detail II in Fig. 1, shown without the cover in the interest of better clarity,

Fig. 3 shows a section along line III–III in Fig. 2.

A two-seat vehicle 1 of the roadster type is generally shown in the drawing figures. This is not essential. For example, a four- or five-seat convertible vehicle provided with rear seats can also be constructed according to the invention.

The vehicle 1 includes a moving roof in its upper area, directly or indirectly bordering a windshield frame 2 that includes a convertible top rear window 4 and a flexible roof cover 5 outside of it, which can be made of a textile or plastic. This can be placed over a roof rod with one or more transverse bows (not shown individually) and attached to them.

The cover 5 extends here beyond a top rear window 4 over the entire roof 3, which is not essential. Also, only a partial area of the roof 3 can be provided with a flexible cover 5 and another part, for example, with rigid plate parts.

Of the roof rods, only one front area of a side frame part 6 and the left end of a transverse support structure that forms the roof strut 7 are shown in Fig. 2, with reference to the direction of travel F.

The roof cover 5 can be tightened, for example, between this roof strut 7 and a rear clip 8 beneath the top rear window 4 (Fig. 1). The clip 8 here lies on a cover part of the auto body when the roof 3 is closed. Instead of clip 8, in another type of folding, a direct body connection of the rear end of the cover 5 is also possible. An entirely different roof shape, for example, with two lateral struts emerging rearward, so-called fins, can also be provided, to which a convertible top rear window is assigned.

In order to achieve a smooth and defined position of the roof cover 5 in the open state, and to limit its tension in the closed state, it is engaged underneath by two straps 9 running at least essentially in the longitudinal direction of the vehicle, shown in Fig. 1 with dashed lines. These straps 9, with their front ends 9a, pass through slit recesses 10 of the roof strut 7, in which engagement occurs from above in the practical example, which is not essential, depending on the design of the roof strut 7. On the other side of the plane of strap 9, which here lies above roof

strut 7, an end thickening 11 is provided, which prevents the strap end 9a, secured in this manner, from being pulled out through the slit recess 10.

The slit recess 10 extends essentially perpendicular to the travel direction F, whereby a slightly oblique position is envisioned here, so that the slit 10 runs in the pulling direction 12 of strap 9 from a lateral widening 13 with a component in this pulling direction 12, i.e., against the travel direction 5. The strap 9 is therefore pulled into the slit recess 10 during the pulling effect 12 from the widening 13 and therefore additionally secured.

The widening 13 has an essentially round contour, whose diameter only slightly exceeds that of the end thickening 11, so that it is prevented from undesired pulling through the widening 13.

To install strap 9, it is threaded through the widening 13 with its end thickening 11 in a tension-free state. The end thickening 11 is then placed parallel in front of the slit recess 10, which is narrow in comparison to the end thickening 11, and it can be loaded under tension in the direction of arrow 12, due to this forced securing

The end thickening 11 is formed here by one loop of the strap end 9a with internal piping (Fig. 3), in which the parts of the loop are held to each other by gluing, welding, hot gluing and/or stitching, for example. The strap end 9a, in the installed state, is secured only by the slit recess 10 and an additional securing, for example, by screwing or riveting, is completely unnecessary. The strap can therefore left without mechanical damage, especially by holes, which improves its lifetime and also permits disassembly and reassembly.

The rear strap end can likewise be secured on an additional rod part, for example, the rear clip 8.

The invention is applicable both to vehicles with a roof 3 to be moved manually and to those with full or partially automatic movement.

It is not essential that the straps 9 pass beneath the cover 5 over its entire length. Straps extending only over partial areas are also possible.